

VZCZCXRO5824
OO RUEHLH RUEHPW
DE RUEHIL #0635/01 0431157
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
O 121157Z FEB 08
FM AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 5066
INFO RUEHKP/AMCONSUL KARACHI PRIORITY 8928
RUEHLH/AMCONSUL LAHORE PRIORITY 4797
RUEHPW/AMCONSUL PESHAWAR PRIORITY 3487
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RUMICEA/USCENTCOM INTEL CEN MACDILL AFB FL PRIORITY
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RHMFISS/CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL PRIORITY
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 ISLAMABAD 000635

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/12/2018

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [MARR](#) [MASS](#) [PHUM](#) [PK](#)

SUBJECT: PAKISTAN: CJCS MULLEN MEETS PRESIDENT MUSHARRAF

Classified By: Anne W. Patterson, Reasons 1.4 (b), (d)

¶1. (C) SUMMARY. Admiral Michael Mullen, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, met with Pakistan President Musharraf February 9 to emphasize the critical importance of the U.S.-Pakistan relationship and his personal commitment to strengthening that relationship. Admiral Mullen conveyed two messages from President Bush urging Musharraf to ensure Pakistan's February 18 elections were free and fair and expressing appreciation for recent meetings with the DNI and DCIA. Clearly pleased by Admiral Mullen's visit, Musharraf appeared confident throughout the discussion, crediting his government with key successes in beating back the insurgency, asking for updates on U.S. assistance, denouncing civil society "agitators," and vigorously defending his government's election planning. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (C) Admiral Mullen stressed the vital importance of the U.S.-Pakistan relationship to both countries and his commitment to strengthening that relationship. Musharraf raised concerns regarding negative press coverage of Pakistan. This coverage, he said, gave the impression that things were "falling apart." Musharraf asserted there was a huge gap between reality and perception, that Pakistan was doing reasonably well politically and had scored some significant military successes against extremists. He declared himself "fed up" with trying to prove everything was generally going well.

¶3. (C) Admiral Mullen noted he had just met with General Kayani, Chief of Army Staff (COAS), and had been impressed with the Kayani's counter-insurgency plan. Admiral Mullen added he had work to do in providing the necessary assistance to Pakistan, but was committed to ensuring appropriate resources were in place to support Pakistan's counterterrorism efforts. The U.S. recognized this was Pakistan's plan and did not intend to infringe on Pakistan's sovereignty. We face common challenges and common threats, said Admiral Mullen, and we can accomplish our goals more effectively together than separately. Musharraf agreed, saying the bottom line was that we were both fighting al-Qaeda and the Taliban, and Pakistan faced the additional challenge of extremists within its own society. There may be, he asserted, "tactical differences of opinion" between us, and even some mistakes, but we can correct those. Above all, our common strategic direction must remain constant - even when modalities are different.

¶4. (C) Musharraf then alluded to the need to coordinate counterterrorism cooperation. The key, he said, was continuous engagement. Admiral Mullen confirmed that he had discussed this issue with COAS Kayani; the key issue was

trust. Musharraf noted the upsurge in suicide bombings had created an environment in which the public was more tolerant of counterterrorism efforts. Musharraf blamed Baitullah Mahsud for recent suicide attacks, adding "we must get this man." He said he had been clear with COAS Kayani on the importance of killing Mehsud. Admiral Mullen remarked that Kayani had been clear and convincing in describing his methodical campaign plan to counter the insurgency. The CJCS also noted that he had not previously been aware of this plan.

¶5. (C) Admiral Mullen emphasized the importance of personal contact, noting he and Kayani had agreed to talk regularly and meet more often. Admiral Mullen also noted the importance of establishing contacts between U.S. and Pakistani military officers. The Ambassador had hosted a reception on February 8 for students from Pakistan's National Defense University, and the CJCS cited this as a good opportunity to engage more junior officers.

¶6. (C) Musharraf repeated parts of Kayani's briefing, describing in some detail the military's success in squeezing militants out of Swat, crediting himself with helping Kayani to develop the military's strategy and the political strategy of setting Waziri tribesmen against rival Masoods. He also described the government's July attack on the militants ensconced in Islamabad's Red Mosque as a success.

¶7. (C) Musharraf then turned to the need for U.S. assistance. Pakistan needed U.S. help with helicopter support, military assistance and support for economic development. Where, he demanded, are the ROZs (Reconstruction Opportunity Zones)? Where is the FATA assistance? We must get this money to implement strategies already in place for socio-economic

ISLAMABAD 00000635 002 OF 003

development projects. Regarding helicopters, Musharraf stressed the fleet could not "go down" and asked for U.S. assistance to restore helicopter capability for military operations.

¶8. (C) Admiral Mullen said he was committed to improving Pakistan's counterterrorism and counter-insurgency capabilities because they were critical to regional stability. He and CENTCOM Commander Admiral Fallon had discussed the need for a comprehensive approach for U.S. military assistance to Pakistan that would directly address enhancing these capabilities.

¶9. (C) Musharraf labeled as "irritants" media reports and public statements suggesting unilateral U.S. military action in Pakistan and/or questioning the safety of Pakistan's nuclear arsenal. Admiral Mullen understood such reports played badly in Pakistan and said his consistent response was that the U.S. government considered Pakistan's protective measures to be sound. However, he added, it was unlikely these questions would go away soon. Covering topics later briefed to Admiral Mullen by the Special Plans Division, Musharraf outlined the measures protecting Pakistan's nuclear assets.

¶10. (C) Admiral Mullen conveyed two messages from President Bush. First, he urged Musharraf to do all he could to ensure Pakistan's February 18 elections were free and fair. Second, President Bush expressed his appreciation for the meetings held with CIA Director Hayden and Director of National Intelligence McConnell. Clearly, both the U.S. and Pakistan faced a long-term counterterrorism effort. Al-Qaeda continued to be a direct threat to the U.S. as well as Pakistan. Musharraf replied Pakistan was concerned by this threat as well, but the government was doing all it could to counter extremism - tackling the Red Mosque, providing a sustained economic upswing and overseeing a smooth democratic transition.

¶11. (C) Musharraf reiterated his pledge that elections be free, fair, transparent, and peaceful. He complained that

civil society activists, including Aitzaz Ahsan (the President of Pakistan's Supreme Court Bar Association currently under house arrest) "might be popular in the U.S.," but Ahsan's organization sought to agitate and "we will not allow agitation." He made similar remarks about human rights activist Asma Jehangir and columnist Pervez Houdbuoy.

¶12. (C) Musharraf hoped the EU election observer mission would remember this was Pakistan, not Europe. Political parties would leverage any local influence they could to influence the election - relatives, clan connections, etc. This had always happened in Pakistan and always would.

¶13. (C) Musharraf said he had established a caretaker government, had thwarted parties' attempts at gerrymandering, ensured polling station locations and electoral rolls were posted on the internet, and supported publicly posting voting results at individual polling stations. Musharraf boasted he had neatly dealt with aggressive questioning by human rights activists in various fora during his recent international tour, mainly by citing the many initiatives Pakistan was undertaking to ensure credible elections and asking questioners for additional suggestions.

¶14. (C) Admiral Mullen asked how much of a disconnect there was between reality and perception in the questions Musharraf fielded at such venues. Musharraf said the gap was huge and largely blamed Pakistan human rights activist Asma Jehangir, saying that international human right groups got their information primarily from her.

¶15. (C) Finally, Admiral Mullen offered Musharraf his condolences on the loss of the Pakistan military personnel killed in a recent helicopter crash. Musharraf thanked the Admiral, noting the helicopter had likely crashed due to technical problems or pilot error.

¶16. (U) U.S. Participants:
Admiral Michael Mullen, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff
Ambassador Anne W. Patterson
Major General Ron Helmlly, Chief of the Office of the Defense Representative, Pakistan (ODRP)
Stacy Nichols (notetaker)

ISLAMABAD 00000635 003 OF 003

Pakistan Participants:
President Pervaiz Musharraf
Major General Shafqaat Ahmad
Principal Secretary Mohsin Hafeez

¶17. (U) CJCS Mullen cleared this cable.

PATTERSON